

Department of Justice High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project *Jacksonville, Florida*



Addressing Interoperability

The Department of Justice (DOJ) Wireless Management Office (WMO) is working to improve long-term federal interagency communications across the Nation. As an interim step, and as a response to a request from the House/Senate CJS Appropriations Subcommittee staff, the DOJ WMO has been leading the High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project (“25 Cities”) to provide targeted cities with basic and immediate interagency communications capabilities among local, state, and federal agencies during emergency response. Twenty-five cities were selected using criteria that included perceived risk and population size. As stakeholders in 1 of the 25 cities, Jacksonville metropolitan area, local, state, and federal public safety agencies have been working collaboratively with the DOJ WMO to address basic interoperable communications.

Participating Agencies

Partnership among Jacksonville area local, state, and federal public safety agencies has been instrumental in the development of comprehensive interoperability solution sets. Participating agencies have included—

- Baker County
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives
- City of Jacksonville
- Clay County
- Department of Business and Regulation
- Department of Environment Protection
- Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation
- Department of Transportation
- Division of State Fire Marshals
- Drug Enforcement Administration
- Duval County
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Florida Department of Law Enforcement
- Florida Highway Patrol
- Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office (JSO)
- Nassau County
- Naval Air Stations (NAS)—Jacksonville and Mayport
- St. Johns County
- Transportation Security Administration
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- U.S. Marshals Service
- U.S. Secret Service

Key Successes

DOJ and area stakeholders successfully achieved basic interoperability and emergency response communications improvements in the Jacksonville metropolitan area through the implementation of four interoperability solutions. The solutions introduce a new wide-area interoperability resource and also support the use of existing, disparate interoperability and communications systems by extending coverage, capacity, and availability to more public safety agencies. Additionally, in the course of meeting this project’s interoperability goals, stakeholders were able to foster a working relationship among local, state, and federal agencies to address interoperability objectives for the area.

DOJ installed a 350-watt conventional narrowband very high frequency (VHF) transmitter, which also acts as a voted receiver, and six voted receive sites strategically located to provide reliable mobile coverage throughout the Jacksonville area. Hosted and maintained by the FBI, the new interoperability channel also enables local, state, and federal agencies operating on disparate radio systems to communicate while using their own agency’s radio

system. The channel is primarily intended for communications among command and control personnel during emergency responses.

Existing agencies with VHF narrowband-capable radios can directly access the federal interoperability channel. To extend connectivity to Jacksonville NAS and Mayport NAS, DOJ provided radio frequency consolettes to link their disparate radio systems to the interoperability channel.

To provide interoperable communications capabilities between federal agencies and local and state agencies, DOJ provided a VHF consolette to interface with the Florida Interoperability Network (FIN) installed at the JSO dispatch center. This solution provides interoperability capabilities between the FIN and the federal interoperability channel. Once fully implemented, the FIN will interconnect nearly all local and state agency dispatch centers throughout Florida and provide voice-communications interoperability among solution participants.

As a backup resource, DOJ installed a JPS ACU-1000 at the JSO dispatch center to interconnect users of disparate systems within the metropolitan region. DOJ also provided a VHF consolette to the JSO for this solution to allow interconnection of audio switch users with the VHF P25 federal interoperability channel.

To support on-scene interoperability, DOJ provided five JPS ACU-T’s transportable audio switches to area agencies. Specifically, one audio switch was provided to the Sheriff’s Office located in each of the following counties: Baker, Clay, Duval (City of Jacksonville), Nassau, and St. Johns. Agency technicians received training from the audio switch manufacturer, JPS Communications, to effectively operate the new equipment and interoperability capabilities.

To address management of the new interoperability equipment, DOJ worked with local, state, and federal agencies to develop standard operating procedures (SOP) to outline the use of communications equipment and to ensure proper operation of interoperability resources.

Moving Forward

The cooperation and support between participating agencies and DOJ WMO provided scalable solutions designed to give additional agencies future access to the interoperability solutions. Sustained operations, maintenance, and support of these interoperability solutions will be coordinated by key stakeholders. These efforts, along with stakeholder support, will ensure continuity in addressing interoperable communications among public safety agencies in the Jacksonville metropolitan area.

Contact Information

If you would like to know more about this initiative and the interoperability solutions, please contact—

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